

# MSDE Bulletin

*MSPAP 2001 Special Edition*

## Twelve Years of MSPP

**M**aryland is gearing up for its annual administration of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) (see the box, below right, for test dates by grade). The test is the crux of the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP)—the State's 12-year-old initiative to improve schools.

In January 2001, esteemed education trade magazine *Education Week* ranked Maryland first in the nation for its outstanding system of standards and accountability. The report ranked states based on items such as subjects tested; clarity of standards; number of grade levels tested; and variety of tests administered. The report noted that Maryland is one of only a few states in which classroom teachers and administrators help develop and score tests.

### Visionary Panel for Better Schools

Despite the high praise from *Education Week*, Maryland is not content with the status quo. State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick believes that the time is ripe to evaluate the present system and plan for the future. Last month she announced the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, a group that will examine state education initiatives, including MSPAP, and make recommendations for the future. "We've made great inroads in reform and accountability over the past decade," said Dr. Grasmick. "Now is a time to step back, examine the current system, and lay the groundwork for the next decade."

Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy, and Sister Helen Amos, executive chairperson of the Board of

Trustees of Mercy Health Services, will co-chair the Visionary Panel for Better Schools. Panel membership will comprise representatives from groups such as educators, parents, community leaders, and business leaders. The panel will also include professionals, such as physicians, interested in children's welfare.

Panel subgroups will examine state tests, funding, teacher quality, leadership, and other topics. The panel is expected to complete its work in December 2001.

### Maryland Learning Outcomes

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) maintains alignment among MSPAP, the Maryland Content Standards, and the Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLOs).

The MLOs were created in 1990 and specify the content and skills tested by MSPAP. The Maryland Content Standards were adopted by the State Board in 1999 and specify the content and skills schools should teach, kindergarten through grade 12.

The adoption of the Maryland Content Standards necessitated a reexamination of the MLOs in 1999. At that time, MSDE realigned the MLOs to the Maryland Content Standards. However, MSPAP will not reflect this realignment until the 2002 test administration. This interval between updating the MLOs and updating MSPAP allows local school systems time to revise their curricula. The MLOs are available on the Web at [mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/whats-tested](http://mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/whats-tested).

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## MSPAP Resources

**Did you know there are so many MSPAP-related resources available?**

***MSPAP: You have questions . . . We have answers***

This Q&A series addresses commonly asked questions about MSPAP. Every public elementary and middle school principal recently received an updated copy of this publication, available at [www.msde.state.md.us/publications/MSPAP%20Q&A.pdf](http://www.msde.state.md.us/publications/MSPAP%20Q&A.pdf).

### ***Administering MSPAP***

Maryland principals recently received a copy of this new video, along with a sample lesson plan and handouts for a staff development meeting. The video

outlines how schools can prepare for test administration, in terms of test security, accommodations, and appropriate ways to encourage students during testing.

### ***Parent Handbook for Better Schools, 2000-2001***

Each elementary and middle school recently received enough copies of the new *Parent Handbook for Better Schools* to send a copy home to every parent. The *Parent Handbook* provides basic information about performance-based instruction, MSPAP, and school improvement in Maryland. MSDE revised it to include

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## 2001 MSPAP Testing Dates

Grades 3 & 8  
April 30-May 4

Grade 5  
May 7-11

## MSPAP Resources

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information on the Maryland Content Standards, CTBS/5, and the Maryland High School Assessments. The *Parent Handbook for Better Schools* is available on the Web at [www.msde.state.md.us/pdf\\_files/ph.pdf](http://www.msde.state.md.us/pdf_files/ph.pdf).

### Improving Student Performance

This 35-minute video, produced and mailed to K-8 schools in spring 2000, examines strategies schools can use to improve student performance. For additional copies, call the MSDE Office of School and Community Outreach at 410-767-0600 or 1-888-246-0016.

### Fact Sheets

Quick, plain-talk fact sheets are available on MSPAP and related topics, such as the School Performance Awards Program and Maryland School

Performance Report. Fact sheets are online at [www.msde.state.md.us/Fact%20sheets/index.htm](http://www.msde.state.md.us/Fact%20sheets/index.htm).

### MSPAP Posters

Each third-, fifth-, and eighth-grade poster summarizes a MSPAP task and provides information on how parents can support student success. Each fall the posters are sent to elementary and middle schools in Maryland. For more copies, call the MSDE Office of School and Community Outreach at 410-767-0600 or 1-888-246-0016, or download the posters from the Web at [www.msde.state.md.us/MSPAP%20Posters/default.html](http://www.msde.state.md.us/MSPAP%20Posters/default.html).

### Technical Report

MSDE publishes annually a *Technical Report* that reviews all facets of the previous year's test administration. The

most recent *Technical Report* is available on the Web at [mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/how-scored](http://mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/how-scored).

### Overview of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program

From task writing to task scoring, this publication explains MSPAP in more detail than the aforementioned materials. View and print it from the Web at [mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/how-scored/mspap\\_info/index.html](http://mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/how-scored/mspap_info/index.html).

### Maryland Learning Outcomes

Every school should have a copy of the Maryland Learning Outcomes, which describe the content and skills tested on MSPAP. The Maryland Learning Outcomes are also available on the Web at [mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/whats-tested](http://mdk12.org/mspp/mspap/whats-tested).

## Twelve Years of MSPP

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### Expanding Outreach

One of the most important lessons the state has learned from 12 years of MSPP is the importance of communication. Each year, MSDE improves existing products and creates new products to better communicate the accountability program to principals, teachers, and parents. MSDE uses a variety of media: print, video production, and the Internet. See *MSPAP Resources*, above and on the front page, for a summary of recent MSPAP materials.

## Did You Know?

- ✓ Test answer books are sorted randomly to ensure that each scorer will receive books from a variety of schools and districts.
- ✓ Before a task is included in a MSPAP administration, it is field-tested with actual students and reviewed by teachers, educational psychologists, instructional supervisors, principals, and early learning university faculty.
- ✓ MSPAP tasks are created and scored by Maryland teachers.
- ✓ MSPAP measures progress toward the Maryland Learning Outcomes.
- ✓ Students with limited absences during MSPAP testing may still receive a score through a process known as algorithmic scoring.

## MSDE Bulletin

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## MSPAP Scorers Wanted!

Each year hundreds of teachers gather at five different sites across Maryland to score MSPAP. Nearly every teacher involved in scoring returns to school in the fall with a deeper understanding of the test and higher expectations for student work—not to mention a bigger bank account balance!

Scoring typically begins at the end of June and lasts for about five to six weeks. The state's scoring contractor, Measurement Incorporated, handles recruitment.

To learn more about summer employment opportunities and to download a job application, visit the employment section of Measurement Inc.'s web site, [www.measinc.com/employ.htm](http://www.measinc.com/employ.htm).

To be a MSPAP scorer, you must be a certified or experienced Maryland educator. When applying, be prepared to mail in a copy of your Maryland teaching certificate or proof of at least three years of satisfactory teaching experience.